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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/626,516	07/25/2003	Kiyoshi Minakuchi	X2007.0135	1110

32172 7590 10/26/2004

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EXAMINER

FIDEI, DAVID

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3728

DATE MAILED: 10/26/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

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Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/626,516

Applicant(s)

MINAKUCHI, KIYOSHI

Examiner

David T. Fidei

Art Unit

3728

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 25 July 2003 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date ____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: ____.

Claim Construction

1. In analyzing applicant's invention as set out in the pending claims, the examiner sets forth the following to aid in understanding the application of the prior art herein. Claims are to be given their broadest reasonable interpretation during prosecution, see *In re Priest*, 582 F.2d 33, 37 199 USPQ 11, 15 (CCPA 1978), and limitations from the specification will not be read into the claims, see, e.g. *In re Prater*, 415 F.2d 1393, 1404-1405, 162 USPQ 541, 550-51 (CCPA 1969), see § MPEP 2106.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

3. Claims 1-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Munson (Patent no. 3,780,487). A stringed instrument case is recited in claim 1 comprising a case body that is formed in a rectangular box-like shape whose upper portion is opened and that has a storage hollow for storing a stringed instrument therein, a case that is interconnected with the case body via hinges to be freely closed and opened; a body fixing member for fixing a body of the stringed instrument at a prescribed position, which is arranged in the storage hollow of the case body; and a neck fixing member for fixing a neck of the stringed instrument at a prescribed position, which is arranged in the storage hollow of the case body while being separated from the body fixing member at a prescribed distance therebetween in accordance with a length of the stringed instrument.

Art Unit: 3728

In order to further limit the claim there must be some distinction based upon the intended use recited. "However, in apparatus, article, and composition claims, intended use must result in a structural difference between the claimed invention and the prior art in order to patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art, see M.P.E.P. § 2111.02 THE INTENDED USE MAY FURTHER LIMIT THE CLAIM IF IT DOES MORE THAN MERELY STATE PURPOSE OR INTENDED USE. The examiner can see no structural differences between the claimed invention for a stringed instrument and the prior art based upon the intended use recited.

As to claim 1, Munson discloses a case comprising a case body 2 comprising a rectangular box-like shape whose upper portion is opened and that has a storage hollow, a case 1 that is interconnected with the case body 2 via hinges 3 to be freely closed and opened; a body fixing member 6, 8 which is arranged in the storage hollow of the case body; and a neck fixing member 7 which is arranged in the storage hollow of the case body while being separated from the body fixing member at a prescribed, see figure 2. Also, the embodiment of figure 7 includes similar features that could have been applied to the rejection.

As to claim 2, the body fixing member 6, 8 has an elongated concave 16, 18 on an upper surface.

As to claim 3, the neck fixing member 7 is considered "freely movable" in the longitudinal direction since it can manifestly be located at different points along the length.

As to claim 4, a plurality of neck reception portions 27, 17 are formed in the neck fixing member 7.

4. Claims 1-3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Weber (Patent no. 4,531,632). A stringed instrument case is disclosed by Weber as recited in claim 1 comprising a case body 30 that is formed in a rectangular box-like shape whose upper portion is opened and that has a storage hollow for storing a stringed instrument therein, a case 34 that is interconnected with the case body via hinges 36 to be freely closed and opened; a body fixing member 70 for fixing a body of the stringed instrument at a prescribed position, which is arranged in the storage hollow of the case body; and a neck fixing member 48 for fixing a neck of the stringed instrument at a prescribed position, which is arranged in the storage hollow of the

Art Unit: 3728

case body while being separated from the body fixing member at a prescribed distance therebetween in accordance with a length of the stringed instrument.

As to claim 2, the body fixing member 70 has an elongated concave 72 on an upper surface.

As to claim 3, the neck fixing member 7 is considered “freely movable” in the longitudinal direction.

REPLY BY APPLICANT OR PATENT OWNER TO THIS OFFICE ACTION

5. “In order to be entitled to reconsideration or further examination, the applicant or patent owner must reply to every ground of objection and rejection in this Office action. The reply must present arguments pointing out the specific distinctions believed to render the claims, including any newly presented claims, patentable over any applied references. The applicant’s or patent owner’s reply must appear throughout to be a bona fide attempt to advance the application or the reexamination proceeding to final action. A general allegation that the claims define a patentable invention without specifically pointing out how the language of the claims patentably distinguishes them from the references does not comply with the requirements of this section. The reply must be reduced to writing (emphasis added)”, see 37 CFR 1.111 (b) & (c), M.P.E.P. 714.02.

Pointing out specific distinctions means clearly indicating in the written response what features/elements or distinctions have been added to the claim/claims, where support is found in the specification for such recitations and how these features are not shown, taught, obvious or inherent in the prior art.

If no amendments are made to claims as applicant or patent owner believes the claims are patentable without further modification, the reply must distinctly and specifically point out the supposed errors in the examiner’s action and must respond to every ground of objection and rejection in the prior Office Action in the same vain as given above, 37 CFR 1.111 (b) & (c), M.P.E.P. 714.02.

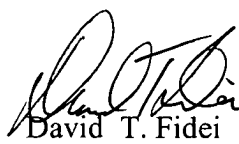
Art Unit: 3728

The examiner also points out, due to the change in practice as affecting final rejections, older decisions on questions of prematurity of final rejection or admission of subsequent amendments do not necessarily reflect present practice. "Under present practice, second or any subsequent actions on the merits shall be final, except where the examiner introduces a new ground of rejection that is neither necessitated by applicant's amendment of the claims nor based on information submitted in an information disclosure statement filed during the period set forth in 37 CFR 1.97(c)" (emphasis mine), see MPEP 706.07(a).

Conclusion

6. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to David T. Fidei whose telephone number is (703) 308-1220. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mickey Yu can be reached on (703) 308-2672.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


David T. Fidei
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3728

dtf
October 25, 2004